

~~SECRET AND DESTROY~~

Commission on Organization  
of the Executive Branch of  
the Government  
1626 K Street, N. W.  
EX 4160 - C. B. Coates (2788)  
- Fred Hamlin (2789)

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A better and cheaper way to handle the federal government's 18,500,000 cubic feet of records -- enough, all told, to fill an estimated six Pentagon Buildings -- was laid before the Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government today.

Creation of a Federal Records Administration to simplify the making and keeping of the government's records was proposed to the 12-man bi-partisan Commission by a research "task force."

Records management is one of 24 major problems of government on which the Commission, created by unanimous vote of Congress in July 1947, will report to Congress early in the new session. Task forces have been at work in each field for many months. The Commission will study the task force reports before making its own recommendations.

The records management task force, headed by Emmett J. Leahy, executive director of the National Records Management Council, made these points in its study:

1. While record making and keeping are "indispensable tools" of government, they are also the "greatest consumers of salaries, space, and equipment" among its administrative or "housekeeping" functions. Their current yearly cost is rated at \$1.2 billion.

2. When non-current records are filed in costly office space, a single 4-drawer filing cabinet may cost as much as \$29 a year to maintain. This can be cut to \$2.15 a year by moving the contents to cardboard cartons on steel stacks and centralizing their storage in low-rental structures.

3. The study "confirms for the first time that more than 50 percent of the total records of the average organization, government or business, can be eliminated from office and plant equipment and space." This can be done primarily by elimination of useless or duplicated records and the transfer of others to storage.

The proposed Federal Records Administration would have as one of its integral parts the existing National Archives Establishment which currently handles about 5 percent of existing government records. The new Administration would establish and operate Federal Records Centers in Washington and in the field for the storage, servicing, and screening of all federal records which must be preserved for a time but need not be maintained in office space and equipment.

Currently, there are over 100 records centers operated by individual departments and agencies. Many of these duplicate and overlap. The new Records Administration would consolidate these, reducing their total contents. In many cases surplus war plants would be utilized for storage purposes. The location of the new records centers would be related to the efficient servicing of the agencies concerned and to the interest of national security.

The Federal Records Administration would also promote government-wide improvements and economies by setting standards and controls for record making and record keeping; by applying tested methods, practices, materials, equipment, and machines; and by maintaining a staff of trained archivists responsible for evaluating, preserving, and servicing records of permanent value.

The task force suggests enactment of a law to be known as the "Federal Records Management Act" which would provide for the establishment of the new Administration. It would also require that outgoing officials and employees deliver records to their successors and establish safeguards against the removal or loss of federal records. It would further establish a Federal Records

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Administration Council superseding the existing National Archives Council and comprising the same membership with the addition of an Administrator of Federal Records.

The report also proposes that each department and agency of the government appoint a qualified records management officer to organize a program designed to eliminate duplication, utilize modern office machines, and streamline correspondence through the use of form letters, pattern letters, fewer copies, procedural guides, automatic typewriters, and other labor saving equipment. The task force expresses belief that if the changes it proposes were adopted within two years, savings in excess of \$32,000,000 might be realized in that period with recurring annual savings of over \$6,000,000 a year thereafter.

Many officials of the government and industry worked closely with the task force, its consultants, and its staff in producing the data on which the report was based.

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Personnel of the "task force" reporting on Records Management in the United States Government to the Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government

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